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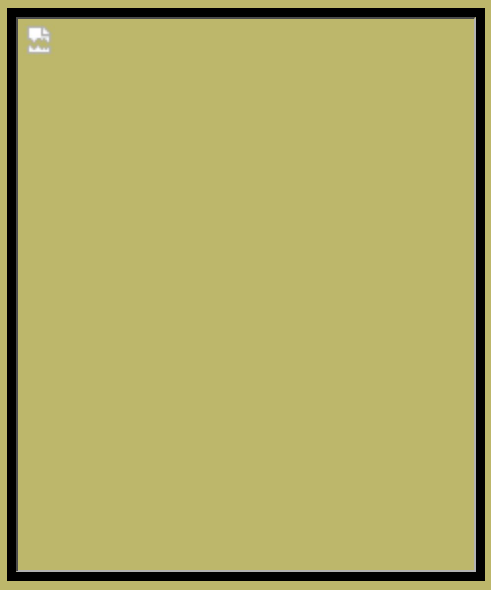
Life of Reverend Henry Moule [1801 – 1880]

Evangelical Minister of Fordington for 51 Years

and Inventor of the Dry Earth Closet

Compiled by Michael Russell OPC for Fordington ©2007 -
Updated November 2009



Rev Henry Moule
[Picture by kind permission of the Dorset County Museum]

The Rev. Henry Moule (pronounced Mole) became Vicar of Fordington when he took over from the **Rev John Palmer** who had held the position for 30 years and died there aged 80 on the 11th May 1829. Henry was himself to remain Vicar for fifty one years until his death in 1880.

The early years (1801-1824) (1)

Henry was born in Melksham Wiltshire on 27th January 1801 the sixth son of twelve children of **George Moule** (1768-1830) and his wife **Sarah Hayward** (1764-1835). His immediate forefathers were in law or business in London but French in origin. His father, a solicitor and banker, had him educated at Marlborough grammar school, and in 1817 he went onto St John's College at Cambridge(2) where he was elected a foundation scholar; obtaining a BA degree in 1821. At university he was greatly influenced by the **Rev. Charles Simeon** (1739-1836), the leader of the evangelical party of the church of England and Rector of Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge. Among other things he was one of the founders in 1797 of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), an organisation that was in later years to play a leading role in the lives of two of Henry's sons.

The next few years were spent travelling in France and Switzerland as a tutor with the family of Admiral Sir W Hotham during the course of which he met a number of interesting people. Among them was John Kemble and a certain **Mons. L'Ainy** who had once been a general in the 'Grand Army' and who told him stories of Moreau's courage in battle. During their travels Henry spent a night in the Hospice of St Bernaud which straddles the highest point in the pass through the Alps. The hospice of St Bernard [4] was founded in 1047 and even then was famous for its St Bernaud dogs. At that time they would have been using the old Roman Road through the pass - the same one used by Napoleon in 1800 to march 40,000 men to defeat the Austrian Army. It is interesting that they chose this route from France into Switzerland as the original college of St John at Cambridge was dedicated to St Bernard in 1437 and provided for the education of Cistercian Monks. It was abolished during the dissolution of the monasteries and although Henry would have attended the new College erected in 1555 he had a daily reminder of its original dedication as a statue of St Bernard, a relic of the original college, sits above the gateway.

On return to England he set out to make a career in the church and was ordained deacon at Salisbury on1st August 1824 [5], and then placed in the curacy of his home town of Melksham.

Marriage to Mary Mullett Evans - 1824

It was in Melksham that he married on 1st July 1824 to Mary Mullett Evans[1 & 3], the second daughter of **Joseph Jefferies Evans**, a citizen and merchant of London, and his wife Mary Ann Mullett. Henry's wife had been born on 17th September 1801 into a large pleasant house over her fathers offices in Staining Lane, close to St Paul's. She went to good schools emerging with perfect handwring and perfect English. If circumstances had led her that way she might have been an excellent litery critic and perhaps an original writer of some acclaim. The Evan's family were of old Baptist stock from Brecon in Wales and Mary's eldest brother a highly gifted individual, was articled to a London Solicitor along with one **Benjamin D'Israeli.** The young Disraeli travelled on the continent that year and carried to Heidelberg a letter announcing their marriage to some of Mary's relatives.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin Gillingham

On 27 February 1825 Henry was ordained a priest by the bishop of Lincoln (*following letters demissory from the bishop of Salisbury*[2]) and on 15th June, as a stipendiary Curate[5], he was placed in sole charge of the church of *St Mary the Virgin* in the village of Gillingham in Dorset.

Normally a curate would be an assistant to the Vicar of such a large parish, but in this case he was absent and the bishop showed great confidence in Henry's ability by placing him in charge, and in recognition of the heavy responsibility he gave him a larger than normal stipend of £150pa. Even so on the 9th September that year Henry decided to supplement his income and advertised in

the Times for four scholars that he could tutor in preparation for University.

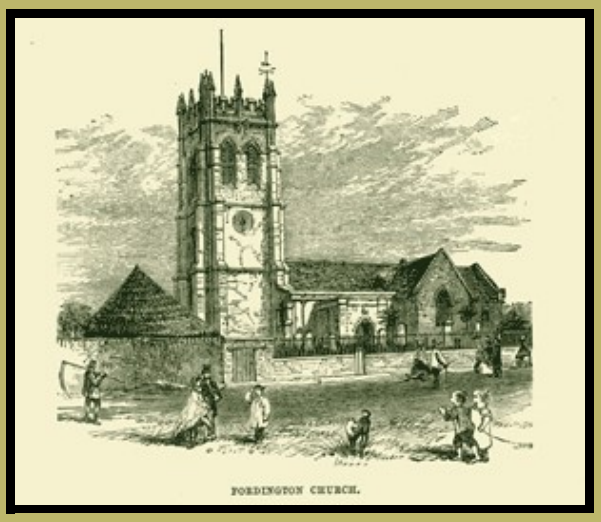
Only sixteen days after he placed his advertisement their first child, Henry Joseph Moule was born at the vicarage, and Henry duly baptised him in the church on the 14th of October 1825. His earnest work in the parish soon won the approval of Bishop Burgess of Salisbury, who came at his request to hold the first confirmation ever remembered at Gillingham. The following year he was awarded his Master of Arts degree and on 29th March 1828 Henry returned to Melksham as Officiating Minister to marry his sister **Elizabeth Jane Moule** who became the second wife of **Colonel Christopher Sullivan Fagan (Vagan)** of the Bengal Army[3 & 9]. A second son duly arrived on 28th January 1828 who was baptised in St Mary's church on 14th April being named George Evans Moule after Henry's father and taking his mothers maiden name. In 1829 the vicar of Gillingham, Archdeacon Fisher, who was also patron of Fordington 'presented' Henry to that benefice.

Arrival in Fordington

In 1829 Henry was still a young man of 28 when he arrived in Fordington with his wife and two children to become the vicar of St Georges Church. He tackled the job with enthusiasm, making himself unpopular with the parishioners by introducing a second fiery sermon in the Sunday service, and reforming the music until he drove the choir away. At his first baptism, (the son of a Cordwainer called Job Allen and his wife Mary), he complained there was no water in the font; the Parish Clerk said of the previous parson, 'He never used no water; he did spit in his hand.' Many of his parishoners also disliked him being an enthusiastic evangelist and for a long time no one called at the Vicarage and worshipers were reviled at the churchyard gates as they passed through. We can gain an insight into his life at that time from the reminiscences of his youngest son, Handley who published them in 1914 in his book entitled. *Memories of a Vicarage.* He explained about his fathers arrival in the Parish:-

> *"Fordington had lately grown, all too hastily, through changes in ground tenure, from a mere village into a suburb of Dorchester. Its crowded lower levels harboured*

much vice and misery and a great deal of political disaffection too; for those were dark days in England with rick burnings, and still more formidable kinds of violence. --- Great contempt of religion was commom in Fordington".


FORDINGTON CHURCH.

The events referred to here are the Swing Riots of 1830/31. Discontent at wages which had been reduced to below subsistence level by greedy landowners, finally boiled over in 1830. Riots which started in Kent, Surrey and Sussex spread rapidly into Hampshire and Dorset where field labourers expressed their anger by burning hayricks and smashing new steam driven machines. In December 1830 at Dorchester 55 men appeared before a special court & six were initially sentenced to death. Letters written by Mary in 1831, from the Vicarage to her relatives, and passed to Handley after her death, give further insight; talking of rick burning she refers to:-

> *"the almost nightly alarms, the constant tidings of violence and disorder, and the energy and courage of Henry, who organised patrols and served on them, and meanwhile retained the good will of the poor"*

In 1833 his protests to Lady Dorchester, a relative of William Pitts, put an end to the evils of the race meetings at Dorchester. The spectacle attracted large numbers of people to the area, many of a dubious moral character, and those left destitute often ended up in Fordington. Handly however also says about that time:-

> *"But a group of devoted Christians, resident in Dorchester, were already at work among the poor, and these admirable friends soon gathered round the new pastor and his wife and held up their hands. So work began. In a short time two school houses, the first ever built, were provided, and a large Sunday School organised. Every part of the parish was visited and and registered weekday services and cottage lectures were begun"*

All this activity gradually improved his standing in the Parish

The Barracks & the Foundation of Christchurch Church in West Fordington

In 1829 Henry had also been appointed by the War Office as Chaplin to the troops in Dorchester Barracks [7], which is now partly occupied by the Dorset History Centre. The Parish of Fordington surrounds Dorchester on 3 sides and this was a time of rapid expansion with West Fordington forming a large suburb. In later years his son recalled:-

> *"Every Sunday, with unfailing energy, he walked up to the town to the military service in the Riding School, read the prayers standing on the sanded floor, preached a short pointed sermon at the drum-head, took up the guinea which lay ready thereon, and then hastened back to his own morning service at St George's".*

For many years he continued with his duties as Chaplin to the Soldiers and in 1845 he wrote a book called "Barrack Sermons". This sold so well he was able to use the royalties to build a church for the troops in West Fordington, which he named '*Christchurch*'. Many of these soldiers married locally and raised families in Dorchester,

Fordington and the surrounding area.

The Vicarage
Home to a growing family

Fordington Vicarage by Henry. J. Moule
By kind permission of the Dorset County Museum

Undeterred by disaffection, Henry ran the vicarage like a self-supporting commune, growing vegetables, running a hothouse and keeping cows. There was a personal tradegdy for him and his wife when in 1839 his 7th son Christopher Cooper Moule died of atrophy when he was still only 15 months old. Throughout he continued earning extra money by teaching, and in 1841 he was not only tutoring his own six surviving children, but also eight paying boarders in the vicarage and adjoining house, something which he continued to do until 1859. We have the following description of the Vicarage from his son Handley's memory:-

> 'It is a rather long and rather low building, standing just off the road which runs from the east through Fordington into Dorchester. From the lower levels of the village the road climbs to a gentle hilltop where for the at least fifteen centuries the dead have been buried, and where the fine perpendicular tower of the parish church looks down upon the water meadows of the Frome river and the trembling blue line beyond of the Purbeck Hills. The village green bordered with houses lies close to the churchyard on the south. You walk on towards Dorchester for a few hundred yards and on your left hand a pair of stone steps leads up from the road to the sidewalk, and a door in a wall swings open, and you stand in the front garden of the house where I was born. Embedded in the wall of the house, close to the front door, is a tracery of a medieval window, discovered some sixty years ago by my father when he made certain changes in the structure; a sign that a priests house must have stood there already in the early fifteenth century. You enter, and find a dwelling seemly roomy of entire simplicity. The dinning room is spacious. as long as the depth of the house; otherwise the chambers are all of a modest scale. They look out, almost all, on the pleasant garden at the back, on lawn, paths, beds and embowering sycamores. The garden adjoins a field, once our field for cricket and other games, now used, I believe as a public playground'.
>
> 'The dear house itself - how shall i describe it? Each room was an individual friend. There was my mother's little parlor, the scene of my infant lessons at her side, and of her lifelong activities of intercourse, correspondence and a hundred works of love. My fathers study was next to it, a sacred room, where grave things in the service of God and man, little understood by the child, were done day by day by the busy pen and studious eyes, but where also we children spent many a happy hour. Then there was the Great Room. In any other house it would have been called the

dinning room; but to us it was always 'the Study', because in the days of the pupils it was used as the chief classroom, between the hours of meals. (*After the alterations done in 1850* he descibes it as :-) It was lighted from both ends, warmed by two fireplaces, peopled with books in three of its four corners, and dignified at the lower end with a glorioyus arm-chair, fully episcopal in scale and style, which my brother henry, a born artificer, wroght out during his Cambridge vacations (1844-1848) as a tribute to his father, using some discaredd oak from a recently rebuilt Dorchester Church for the purpose.

Out of the Great room opened its counterpart, 'The Play room', used also for lessons, but much more as a place reserved for all the odds and ends of time. many a merry indoor game it itnessede, and I still hear the voices that joined in part-songs there on a winter evening, taight and led by my brother Horace, one of whose many gifts was music; at twelve years old he was already the 'little organist' in out parish church.

Upstairs there were many rooms precious now to memory and first though remotest was the Nursery. In the nursary wall was a door, opening into 'the closet', a little dark chamber with many shelves full of multitudinous toys - articles most of them strong and durable long lived friends of those days. Close to the nursary was my mothers bedroom. and the long upstairs passage led to other rooms.

Cholera Outbreaks 1849 & 1854

In 1849 and 1854 Fordington was badly affected by outbreaks of Cholera. Although at first he was heartily disliked for his puritanical zeal, when the deadly cholera came Moule worked tirelessly with the sick and the dying, boiling or burning contaminated clothes and bedclothes, spreading help and sympathy. Handly his son later recalled:-

" *Far more vividly I remember the autumn of 1854, when the cholera was upon us, and in tremendous force. A number of convicts had been drafted from London to the then vacant cavalry barracks and laundresses in Fordington took in the washing. The clothes had the disease lurking in them, and the awful mischief burst forth in the densely peopled and undrained lanes of the town end of our village. My dear Father, with great courage and resource, "stood between the dead and the living", and with the zealous help of the doctors (trained nurses hardly existed then) so dealt with the position that no case of infection occurred in the closely adjoining town. But our churchyard was peopled with deadful rapidity; I remember six funerals in one day".*

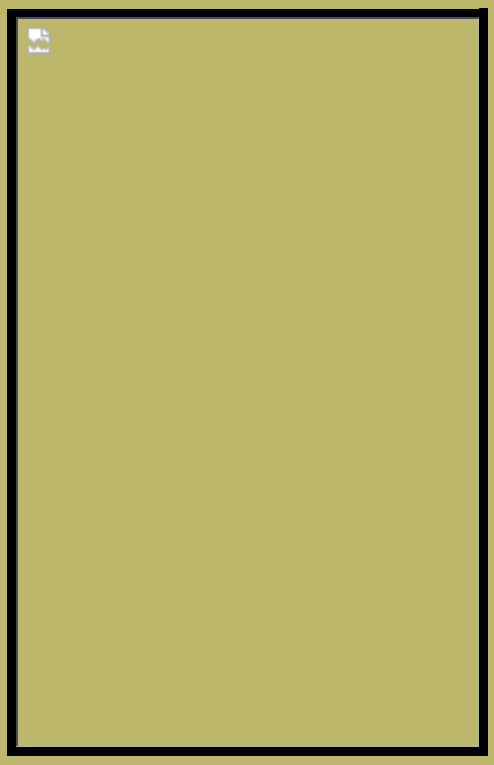
(*Link to detailed account of the Cholera Outbeak of 1854*)

At this time he even gave up some of his church services and called people out into the fields for prayers, hymns, and preachings under the trees. As a consequence of his endeavours Henry gradually won the respect of the whole community. He was convinced that the Cholera deaths were caused by appalling sanitation. Once, as he knelt by the bed of a dying man, the overflow from the one privy shared by 13 families trickled between him and the bed, and he saw the sewage bubbling up from the earth beneath the fireplace. What was needed was sanitary reform.

The long, hot summer of 1858 highlighted the problem with the existing system of cesspools. Cholera, which was now known to be spread by contaminated water, was a constant problem and London became completely overwhelmed by its sewage when the streams through the city and feeding the Thames could no loger cope with the volume of effluent being produced. Coupled with an unusually warm summer that year the problem produced such a foul smell throughout the city that chemical soaked sacks had to be hung at the windows of the House of Commons and that year is now known as "The Great Stink of London".

In the summer of 1859 Henry decided his cess-pool was intolerable and a nuisance to his neighbour; so he filled it in and instructed his family to use buckets. At first he buried the sewage in trenches in the yard but discovered by accident that in 3 or 4 weeks no trace of

the matter could be detected. So he erected a shed, sifted the dry earth beneath it, and mixed the contents of the bucket with dry earth every morning. “ the whole operation does not take a boy more than a quarter of an hour and within ten minutes after its completion neither the eye nor the nose can detect anything offensive”.



Then he discovered that he could recycle the earth and use the same batch several times and use the contents to beneficial effect in the garden. He persuaded a farmer to fertilise one half of a field with earth used five times in his closet and another with equal weight of superphosphate. Swedes were planted in both halves and those nurtured in earth manure grew one third bigger.

Dry Earth System Patent [8]

Far more important Moule believed that if this system could be adopted widely it would go a long way towards preventing the spread of disease, thereby leading to a general improvement of everybody’s health. He produced a sort of commode with a bucket below the seat and a hopper behind it containing dry earth or ashes. When you had finished you pulled a lever to release a measured amount of earth into the bucket and cover its contents. On 28th May 1860 he took out a patent for the dry earth system and further patents in 1869 and 1873. He set up the Moule Patent Earth Closet Co. Ltd which manufactured and sold earth closets.

Moule dry earth closet

Moule spent the rest of his life advocating its adoption and he managed to convince a lot of people. In 1865 the Dorset County School in Dorchester with 83 boys adopted the system cutting the annual maintenance costs and eliminating smells and diarrhoea. The Indian Government in particular established the system in its hospitals, lunatic asylums and gaols and commissioned a report following trials in Bengal; the Punjab and North Western Provinces. They were so satisfied with the results that they awarded him a payment of £500, a considerable sum in those days. He took the step of publishing extracts from the report and letters to him from the Indian Government in the Times on 14th November 1867.

In 1868 the Lancet reported that 148 of his dry earth closets were used at the Army volunteer encampment at Wimbledon – forty or fifty of them used daily by not less than 2000 men, “without the slightest annoyance to sight or smell”.

Mary Moule

For many years Mary’s main role had been the rearing of her children, and overseeing of domestic arrangements for a household often exceeding 16, but by 1859 when they gave up paying pupils and Henry started filling in his cess pool, she was free to devote herself more to the service of the Parish. She had already been the devoted superintendent of the girls Sunday School and a friend of every teacher and pupil. Now she embarked upon

an incessant domestic visitation programme during the course of which she came to know not only every house but well-nigh every room in the Parish. No weather, however wet , windy, or cold ever interfered with the literally daily round. One woman said to Handley of her " Her feet brought light into the room". Mary suddenly had a stroke on 29 June 1877 from which she was paralysed and during the next 8 weeks she never spoke again before she passed away on 21st August. She was buried 3 days later in St George's churchyard & the Teachers of the Sunday School she had befriended for nearly 50 years paid for a wall plaque to be erected inside the church to her memory.

The Children of Henry Moule and Mary Mullett Evans

Henry & Mary had 8 sons in all as listed below. Henry Joseph was 4 years old, and his brother George just 1 when the family arrived in Fordington in 1829. All the others were born at the Vicarage in Fordington. In addition to these children one of Mary's relations died leaving orphaned a small boy called **Matthew Evans**. He was brought by coach from Bristol to Fordington in the year 1846 and raised alongside the youngest of their children as one of their own. Matthew is depicted in the family picture given below and became a much respected Canterbury Rector

Henry Joseph Moule [1825 - 1904] Water Colour Artist

George Evans Moule [1828 - 1912] Missionary and Bishop of Mid China

Frederick John Moule[1830 - 1900] Vicar of St Peters Church - Yaxley

Horatio Mosley Moule [1832 - 1873] Friend of Thomas Hardy

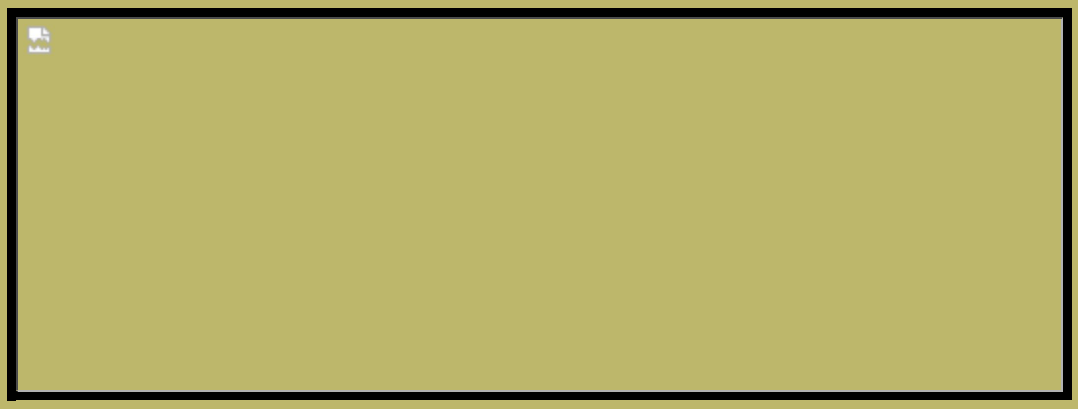
Charles Walter Moule [1834 - 1921] Classical Lecturer & Tutor at Cambridge

Arthur Evans Moule [1836 - 1916] Missionary & Archdeacon of Mid China

Christopher Cooper Moule [1838 - 1839] *[Died an Infant]*

Handley Carr Glyn Moule [1841 - 1920] Bishop of Durham

Reverend Henry Moule and family on Fordington Vicarage lawn 5th Aug 1869



Identification

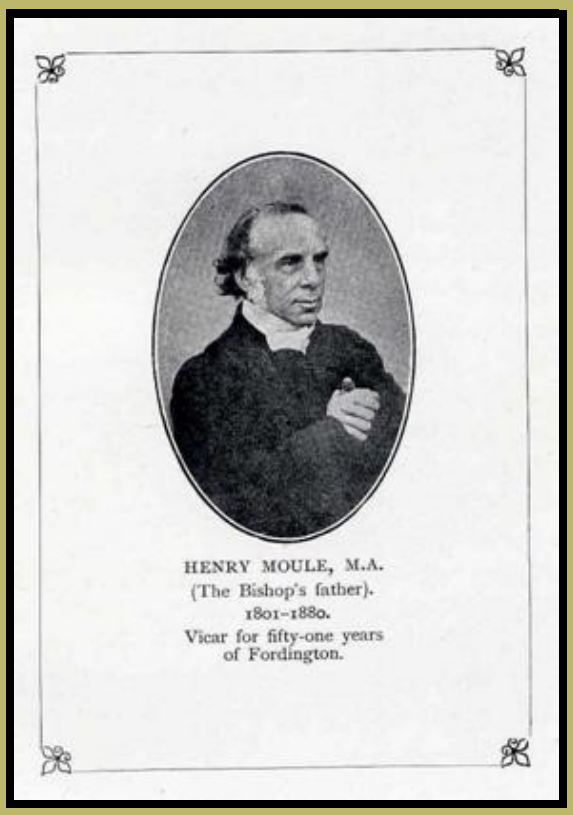
Standing (left to right): Arthur Evans Moule; Eliza Agnes (wife of Arthur); Henry Joseph Moule; Elizabeth (wife of Henry); Mathew Evans (Curate of Fordington and Nephew); Handley Carr Glyn Moule: Charles Walter Moule; Horatio Mosley Moule; George Evans Moule; Adelaide Sarah (wife of George); Frederick John Moule; Mary Alicia (wife of Frederick)

Seated: Rev Henry Moule; Mary Mullett Moule (wife of Henry)

Moule family connection with Thomas Hardy [1840-1928]

It is not quite clear how Thomas Hardy got to know the Moule family, nor which member he knew first. It was probably the eldest son Henry Joseph with whom he remained a close friend for fifty years. Although Hardy was also friendly with George and Charles, it was Horatio Mosley Moule *[known as Horace]* whom Hardy met in 1857 who had the greatest influence on him.

Henry Moule died just short of his 80th birthday at Fordington on Tuesday 3rd February 1880 and was similarly honoured. They are buried together in the foremost grave in St George's churchyard.



Mary Moule

Portraits taken In Later Years: Link to Monumental Inscriptions in St Georges Church

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Publications

Throughout his life Henry wrote many books and particularly pamphlets on religious and educational topics as well as volumes of poetry. I have located the following at the British Library which include some publications issued after his death in 1880 (system reference numbers added after the title). Unfortunately I do not have the time or resources to order and view them:-

Two Conversations between a Clergyman and one of his Parishioners on the Public Baptism of Infants 002568137 (1843)
Scraps of Sacred Verse 014616928 (1846);
'Barrack Sermons' preached at Dorchester 002568101 (1847);
Four Letters to ... Prince Albert ... on the Dwellings and Condition of ... the Working Classes and Poor of Fordington 002568104 (1854)
Eight letters to Prince Albert as President of the Council of the Duchy of Cornwall 002568103 (1855)
Scriptural Church Teaching 002568127 (1848);
Tempora mutantur. A Memorial of the Fordington Times Society.001268769 (1859)
My Kitchen Garden by a Country Parson 001978398 (1860);
Manure for the Million; A Letter to the Cottage Gardeners of England 002568113 (1861);
Self-supporting Boarding Schools and Day Schools for the children of the industrial classes

002568129 (1856) & 002568130 (1862)
Good out of Evil. A series of letters 002568105 (1863)
Hope against Hope. Illustrated in the case of the Convict E. Preedy, who was hanged for murder at Dorchester, March 27, 1863. 002568107 (1863)
Pardon and Peace. Illustrated by a few brief ministerial memorials, to which are added some pieces of sacred verse 002568121 (1865)
Supplemental Hymns of Adoration and Praise 002568132 (1865);
Earth sewage versus water sewage, or, National health and wealth instead of disease and waste 007937116 (1868);
La terre se`che substitue´e a` l'eau dans le curage des fosses d'aisances ou Salubrite´ et richesse publiques remplac¸ant la maladie et la de´perdition (1868);
Narrative of the conversion of a Chinese Physician 002568133 (1868);
Our Home Heathen: how can the Church of England get at them? 002568119 (1868)
More than one universal Deluge recorded in the Scriptures. A paper read at a Meeting of the Victoria Institute,002568114 May 3, (1869)
Land for the Million to Rent Addressed to the Working Classes of England 002568110 (1870);
The Science of Manure as the Food of Plants, etc 002568125 (1870)
The Impossibility Overcome: or, the inoffensive, safe, and economical disposal of the refuse of towns and villages, etc 002568108 (1870)
Self-supporting Boarding Schools and Day Schools for the children of the industrial classes. Two papers, read before the Southern Counties Adult Education Society 002568131 (1871)
National Educational expenses: how to a large extent these may be met 002568115 (1871);
The Dry Earth System. The advantages of the Dry Earth System in the disposal of sewage and excreta 002568102 (1871)
Israel in Egypt: the period of their sojourn and their numbers at the Exodus 002568109 ... A paper read ... June 5, (1871)
The Potato Disease: its cause and remedy. "Three Letters to the 'Times." 002568123 (1872);
Town Refuse the remedy for Local Taxation 002568135
On the Testimony of a portion of the vegetable creation to the God of the Scriptures. A paper read at a meeting of the Victoria Institute,002568117 March 17,(1873);
Scripture Interpreted on Scripture Principles 002568128 (1874);
The Relation of Jew and Gentile in God's eternal purpose. 002568124 June 11th and 12th, (1874);
National Health and Wealth promoted by the general adoption of the dry earth system, 002568116 (1875)
The "Moule-and-With" Manures and the "With" Compound 001660428 (1877)
Harvest Hymns 002568106 (1877)
To the Worshipful the Mayor and the Town Council of the Borough of Dorchester. [On a scheme for the drainage of Dorchester.] 002568134 (1879);

"Doctrine, Manner of Life, Purpose." Sermons preached ... on occasion of the death of ... Henry Moule ... By three of his sons [H. C. G. Moule, G. E. Moule, and A. E. Moule] (1880)
Light at Evening Time: a story of conversion ... Edited with a preface by .. Handley C. G. Moule, D.D., Bishop of Durham 002568111 (1908)
Paupers, criminals and cholera at Dorchester in 1854 : being letters from Henry Moule to H.R.H. the Prince Consort during the cholera of 1854010309945 (1968)

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Genealogical sources and Notes:-

(1). Memories of a Vicarage by Handley C.G.Moule published by The Religious Tract Society 1914 of which I own an original copy.
(2). Cambridge University Alumni, 1261-1900 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 1999. Original data: Venn, J. A., comp.. Alumni Cantabrigienses. London, England: Cambridge University Press, 1922-1954 - sizar at St John's July 3rd 1817. Matriculated Michs 1817; Scholar 1817; BA 1821; MA 1828; Ordained deacon (Salisbury) Aug 1st 1824; Priest (Lincoln Litt dim frim Salisbury) Feb 27 1825
(3). Church of latter Day Saints International Genealogical Index (IGI) extraction programme (do not confuse with a member entry)
(4). Link to more information about the Hospice of St Bernard
(5). Clergy of the Church of England database
(6). Fordington St Georges church Parish Registers
(7). This is a link to the Ordnance Survey map of Fordington for the year 1890 on the "British History on Line" website. Because I have selected a higher magnification and specific point

in the map it takes rather a long time to load. Once loaded however just click on the edge of map in the direction you wish it to move and you can travel around Fordington at will. As you enter you will see the Infantry barracks housing the Dorset History Center and running diagonally to the north "Poundbury road" with the "Royal Horse Artillery Barracks" on the other side as well as the location of the church Henry Moule funded and built called "Christchurch".

(8). Times Newspaper contains numerous advertisements, papers, comments etc about the Dry Earth Closets as well as articles about its success etc in places like India

(9). The first wife of Colonel Christopher Sullivan Fagan, is recorded on the IGI by a member as being Agnes Baldock of Guernsey,whom he married circa 1809 and is said to have died about 1826.

Fordington Page **OPC Page**

Learning Centers at ancestry.com | Census Records | Vital Records | Family Trees & Communities | Immigration Records | Military Records
Directories & Member Lists | Family & Local Histories | Newspapers & Periodicals | Court, Land & Probate | Finding Aids